

HALL OF DISTINCTION

Inaugural Class of 2019

INDUCTION CEREMONY

Thursday, September 30, 2021

First Lieutenant Sharon Lane, RN

Sharon graduated from Canton South in 1961. After graduation, she pursued her dream of becoming a nurse by attending the Aultman Hospital School of Nursing. She graduated from the program in April of 1965 and took a job in the obstetrics unit at Aultman Hospital. Two years later, she tried her hand in the business world. She made it through three quarters at the Canton Business College before deciding to join the U.S. Army Nurse Corps Reserve in April of 1968.

Training for second lieutenant Sharon Lane began in May of 1968 at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. She graduated in June of that year and three days later reported for duty at the Army's Fitzsimons General Hospital in Denver, Colorado. Her first assignment was with three tuberculosis wards. She was promoted to first lieutenant and was re-assigned to the Cardiac Division's Intensive Care Unit and Recovery Room. She worked in the ICU until April 24, 1969, when she reported to Travis Air Force Base, California, with orders sending her to Vietnam.

Nursing the Vietnamese in Ward 4 was often physically and emotionally challenging, yet Lane repeatedly declined transfers to another ward. She worked five days a week, twelve hours a day in Ward 4, and spent her off-duty time taking care of the most critically injured American soldiers in the Surgical ICU. She thrived despite the demanding schedule and was adored and respected by co-workers and patients alike.

On the morning of June 8, 1969, the 312th Evacuation Hospital was struck by rockets fired by the Viet Cong. One rocket struck between Wards 4A and 4B, killing two people and wounding another twenty-seven. Among the dead was first lieutenant Lane, who died instantly of fragmentation wounds to the chest. She was one month shy of her twenty-sixth birthday.

Though one of eight American military nurses who died while serving in Vietnam, Sharon Lane was the only American nurse killed as a direct result of hostile fire.

A memorial service was held in Chu Lai on June 10, 1969, and a Catholic mass followed the next day. Lane was buried

with full military honors at Sunset Hills Burial Park in Canton.

For her service in Vietnam, first lieutenant Sharon Ann Lane was awarded the Purple Heart, the Bronze Star with "V" device, the National Defense Service Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal, the National Order of Vietnam Medal, and the Vietnamese Gallantry Cross (with Palm).

In the years that followed her death, various individuals and organizations honored Lane in a variety of ways. On November 11, 1969, the Fitzsimons Hospital named its recovery room the Lane Recovery Suite and put a plaque and a picture on display. In that same year, the Daughters of the American Revolution named her Outstanding Nurse of the Year and posthumously awarded her the Anita Newcomb McGee medal in 1970.

In 1973, a statue of Lane was dedicated in front of Aultman Hospital, and in 1986, the Hospital opened the Sharon Lane Women's Center in its front lobby. In his eulogy, Canton Mayor Stanley Cmich. "Lane should be honored for her service to America. That she was willing to go and serve in the capacity she did: healing. She didn't go into battle, but she battled for her patients."

The Canton Chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America officially changed its name to the Sharon Lane Chapter #199. Roads in Denver, Colorado, and at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, have been named in her honor. Even though over fifty-two years have passed since her death, first lieutenant Sharon Ann Lane remains an important symbol representing the sacrifices and service of the thousands of American women who served in the Vietnam War.

"She was a very loving caring person," said Patricia Powell, vice president of the Sharon Lane Memorial Chapter 199 of Vietnam Veterans of America. "I don't think she ever looked at what nationality people were. She was there to help. She was a very dedicated nurse. If you needed help, that's what she did."

We wish we would have had the pleasure of meeting Sharon. We are honored to add to those who have paid tribute to her legacy and to present this award to her family.